What My Religion Means To Me

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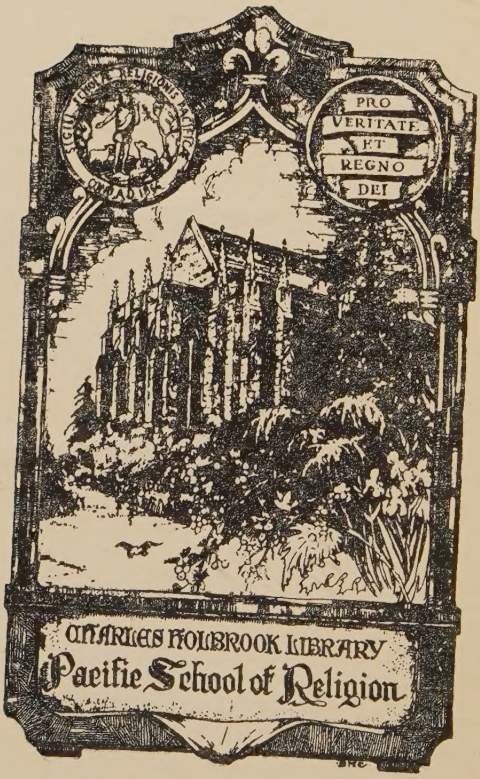
Edgar A. Guest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What My Religion Means to Me

By

Edgar A. Guest

Verse—

The Passing Throng
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What My Religion Means to Me

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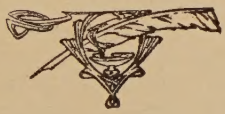

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My Creed

TO LIVE each day as though I may never see the morning come; to be strict with myself, but patient and lenient with others; to give the advantage, but never to ask for it; to be kindly to all, but kindlier to the less fortunate; to respect all honest employment; to remember always that my life is made easier and better by the service of others, and to be grateful.

To be tolerant and never arrogant; to treat all men with equal courtesy; to be true to my own in all things; to make as much as I can of my strength and the day's opportunity, and to meet disappointment without resentment.

To be friendly and helpful wherever possible; to do, without display of temper or of bitterness, all that fair conduct demands; to keep my money free from cunning or the shame of a hard bargain; to govern my actions so that I may fear neither reproach nor misunderstanding nor words of malice nor envy, and to maintain, at whatever temporary cost, my own self-respect.

To keep faith with God, my fellowmen, and my country.

This is my creed and my philosophy. I have failed it often, and shall fail it many times again; but by these teachings of my mother and my father, I have lived to the best of my ability; laughed often, loved, suffered, grieved, found consolation, and have prospered. By friendships I have been enriched and the home I have builded has been happy.

—*Edgar A. Guest.*

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PACIFIC SCHOOL

What My Religion Means to Me

ELIGION has been the greatest single influence in my life. At forty-three, I can look back and see that but for the spiritual teaching and help which I received from my mother, the achievements which have strengthened and comforted and pleased me most could never have been. Without that religious belief which she impressed upon me, I am certain that I should not be where I am to-day. I should not have the friends which are mine, nor the place which I occupy. I should be somewhere back in the desert of doubt and skepticism,

groping and struggling along, seeking material success with only the poor tools of my ability.

Without my religion, I should have made enemies where I have gathered friends.

Without my religion I should have gone down where I have climbed up; I should have been sordid where I have found joy in being sentimental; I should have been shunned where I have been welcomed, and although I might have made money and saved some portion of it, I am sure that I should have done many things which would have been to me a shame and a regret.

Without my religion, I should have suffered a loss in self-respect and in the esteem of others.

I am convinced that religion is necessary to worth-while achievement.

I want Bud, my boy, to know this. The sooner any young man discovers that belief in God and belief in his own divine purpose are vital to his career, the better it will be for him. I would rather die leaving nothing to my boy but his religion, than to die leaving him a fortune, with no religion.

If I can but impress upon him, as my mother impressed upon me, the fact that God has given him a soul to be his for all eternity, that he has been blessed with divine powers to beautify and glorify that soul; if I can give to him the sure belief in a Supreme Being, I shall not have to

worry about his future. He will be safe against temptation. He will be able to see crooks and liars and cheats prosper temporarily, and still retain his own honor. With that faith, he can be manly, self-reliant, independent, humor-loving, artistic, athletic, friendly, and whatsoever he wills to be. The boy who has faith in God will have faith in himself.

The football player with a religion is a better player than the boy without one. The business man with a real, live, earnest religion is a better business man than the scoffing non-believer. All the great men of nearly all the ages have had a religion.

But with Bud's own faith I want him also to have respect for the religion of others. His soul can never become truly great by warping it into the straight-jacket of the bigot. Religion has suffered most from two classes of people — the hypocrites and the bigots.

The bigots have stained their conception of Christianity with bloodshed and crimes; the hypocrites have made religion appear ridiculous and dishonest. It is difficult to guess which has done the more harm. The bigots have driven men away from the church; the hypocrites have kept countless numbers out of it.

I want Bud to know that he can have his religion without being a

mollycoddle. He can keep his manhood and his faith side by side. He can laugh and be religious; he can play football, swim, go fishing, and hunting; in short, he can express in his own way the joy of being alive, and at the same time be religious. I can see nothing in the church or its teachings which should change a naturally robust, healthy-minded, joyous human being into a pasty-faced, smug-smiling, hand-stroking, intolerant creature, neither all man nor all woman.

NOTHING has hurt the church more, in my opinion, than the fear among the young people that religion would put an end to laughter and amusement. The old-

fashioned church entertainment was a nightmare of boredom. It was reckoned almost a sin to laugh in the vicinity of a church.

Hypocrisy has dealt more than one foul blow to the church. The saintly hymn-singing person of the Sabbath who spent the week days in anything but Christian business practices has been an enemy and a hindrance to religion. He has made cynics and scoffers of our youth.

The religious fanatic and the religious grouch have been too much in the limelight, although they are not true types of the Christian religion. They have unconsciously made the teaching of religion most difficult for its best and manliest

leaders. They have builded a wall of prejudice which still exists, against which the real people within struggle in vain, and over which the young people without disdainfully refuse to climb.

THAT church which can convince the young people that they may live their lives normally within its fold, may have their pleasures and their freedom of action, may think for themselves and express their own opinions without fear of being squelched and humiliated, will find youth participating in its activities, and will come into an ever-broadening soul-inspiring influence.

I was born into and taught in the

Swedenborgian faith. This is one of the beautiful religions of the Protestant side of the Christian church. Numerically it has never been strong, and probably never will be. But spiritually it has had an influence which has been felt throughout the world. Its growth is held back, perhaps, by the fact that its doctrines require close and intensive study, without which much of its beauty is difficult to understand.

I never passed very deeply into the doctrines of my church. I received my religious training in the Swedenborgian Sunday-school in Detroit; but I learned more from my mother than from anyone else. Into the intricacies of the church's correspondences and symbols, its

explanations of the doubtful and puzzling passages of the Scriptures I cannot go now. However, I did take out of that little church in Detroit, which stood for years at the corner of Cass Avenue and High Street, a faith in God and life eternal which has sustained and protected me through all the trials and temptations which the years have brought. Perhaps, after all, that was the purpose of those ponderously heavy doctrinal sermons which oftentimes were over my head and far beyond my youthful understanding.

Since our marriage, my wife and I have attended the Episcopal church, because she is an Episcopalian. So I am a Swedenborgian

by birth, and an Episcopalian by marriage.

And now for an inventory of my religious experiences. I am satisfied beyond the slightest doubt that whatever good habits I have acquired I owe to my religion, and whatever bad habits and shortcomings and failings I have, I owe to grosser and more material influences.

Out of my religion have come the verses of mine which have had the widest appeal.

I owe to my religion my home and the peace within it.

I owe to my religion my ability to make friends and keep them.

I owe to it whatever of patience has been mine and whatever steadfastness of purpose I have displayed.

I owe to it my powers of understanding, for it was from my mother and her religious teachings I caught my first glimpse of the great brotherhood of man.

And it has all been so simple, and so practical. It has not changed my nature nor altered in the least my manner. It has regulated my conduct, but it has never kept me from a sport in which it was proper to indulge, nor has it kept me out of a business venture in which it was honest to engage.

I have met and walked and talked with all manner of men. I have laughed with the loudest, joked with the coarsest; visited as a reporter the vicious and the vile, and have done it without losing their respect or my own.

I have been neither a mollycoddle nor a brute. I have preached religion to no one nor have I tried to alter any man's religious opinions. I have tried never to be a wet blanket on the fire of any man's pleasure. I have made just a few rules for myself, and none for my neighbor. I have tried to keep my religion, my belief in God, and my faith in eternity, as a restraint for me alone.

I have not been what is called a regular church-goer. I have never been a deacon or a warden or a pillar. As a boy, I pumped the church organ twice every Sunday for two or three years, and once in a spirit of mischief I let the wind die out, to the utter destruction of

the anthem. It was something I had secretly wanted to do. I thought it would be funny to desert the organist in the middle of his masterpiece!

The temptation to make that experiment was irresistible. On three or four occasions I let the wind die down until the little indicator was almost at its last notch, but my courage failed me. At the last second I swung the bellows stick viciously up and down and saved the day for the organist.

But the time came when I simply had to go through with it. I ceased pumping, and sat back and awaited results. They came speedily enough. Soon the organ flattened out in one long, dismal wail! I could hear

the organist's fingers striking the ivory keys, but there was no other sound. The choir tried to continue with the anthem, but the congregation began to titter and the titters increased to audible laugther. There were frantic calls for me on the electric buzzer, and the next week there was a new boy pumping the organ.

Thus ended my connection with the church in an official capacity. I continued to attend, but my place thereafter was in the family pew, where the family could keep an eye upon me.

A FEW years later I became a reporter on the Detroit "Free Press," and my duty on Sundays

was to report news about the churches. Within a few months I had sat beneath the teachers of nearly every religion and creed. I had attended services in orthodox and reformed Jewish synagogues; masses in Catholic churches; baptisms in Baptist churches; revivals in Methodist churches, and so on through the long list of them all.

I had been in cathedrals and little frame mission houses, *and I made the discovery that all of them, from the greatest to the humblest, were trying for the same result—to do good.* I have never been in a church in which I have ever heard a minister attempt by his utterances to degrade a man or lower his standards or ideals.

In the course of time I made still another discovery: My visits to these churches had enriched me with various friendships. Rabbi Leo M. Franklin has been my friend almost from the day of his arrival in Detroit, more than twenty years ago. The same is true of Bishop Gallagher, of the Catholic Church, and Bishop Henderson, of the Methodist Church. I counted among my friends the priests and ministers and the laymen of all the denominations and almost all the known faiths of the country.

WHAT a loss would be mine if I should let religion build a wall of prejudice about me!

What if I were to restrict my friends to those of my own particular little faith?

I might as well determine to walk only with people who wear bow ties like myself, or gray suits. I don't like pumpkin pie, but if I shunned all the people who do I should have to give up the company even of my wife and children, who are very fond of it.

So in those early reportorial days of mine I added to my religion a resolution not to be a bigot. I determined never in advance to like or dislike any human being because of his religion.

That which gives comfort to another, I decided, I would respect. The man whose belief in God is

strong enough to lead him to go to any church has that kinship with me which makes of him a brother.

He may lose my friendship by wrong doing; may lose my respect by vicious habits and crooked dealing; I may shun him because he is loud and vulgar and distasteful; I may despise him because I have found him to be a liar or a cheat or self-centered to the extreme, a faithless husband and an unkind father, but I shall never censure him for his faith nor deny him my good will because of his religion.

I have always tried to be tolerant. Clinging fast to my own religion I have endeavored, as far as it was within my power to do so, to support and respect all churches.

Bud, my boy, be tolerant of your brother's faith. Nothing that he learns in his church will degrade him or you. No religion will teach him to cheat you or harm you or lead you astray. If you shall find him unworthy of your trust and your companionship, it will not be because of his church but in spite of it. You may be sure that he got his vicious habits and his mean practices elsewhere. He is not bad because he is Catholic, Jew or Protestant; he is bad because he has deserted his religion.

ONE OF THE MOST pleasing little bits which have ever appeared in print about me was published a few years ago by a Catholic

weekly which is circulated through Michigan. An inquiring correspondent wrote to the editor this question:

"Is Edgar A. Guest a Catholic?"

The editor printed his reply in about these words:

"Edgar A. Guest is not a Catholic. We understand that he is an Episcopalian; but we should like to say to our inquirer that all Catholics who know him consider him their friend."

The further I go up the hill of life the more tolerant I become. The more I see of men and their practices, the more I discover this truth: The best people are in the churches, and the worst people are out of them.

RELIGION is more necessary to a young man than to an old man. Old people may find comfort in the church, but their habits of life are fixed and they are comparatively safe from serious dangers. Young people have suffered little, and they do not need the comfort which the aged seek. They need friendships and ideals and wisdom and strength and counsel, and an opportunity to fulfill their dreams. They need laughter and song and good nature and kindly thought and human understanding. Religion can, and does, provide them all.

Religion pays. Get this straight, Bud — crooks and highwaymen and gangsters and rioters, and

all the lowest elements of mankind, are seldom or never religious. But Presidents, and statesmen, and great lawyers and great artists, and the leaders in all the trades and professions, usually are.

The people who go to the churches are the best people of the community. Forget the smug hymn-singing hypocrite and the narrow little bigot, and remember only this fact: If you hope for the best; if you would make the most of yourself and your opportunity; if you would win honor and good will and the world's esteem, you will need all the courage and all the inspiration and all the strength which your religion can give you. Without religion you will never be

as great a man as you would be with it.

Bud, you can keep your faith in God and follow any profession you may choose. It will not restrict your opportunity nor become an obstacle to your ambition. It will not deprive you of a single manly friend. You will not have to associate with sissies to be religious. You can be red-blooded and virile and strong. If you should choose to become a prize fighter—I hope you won't—I should want you to cling to your religion. You would be a better prize fighter for your faith. Your religion would keep you from striking a foul blow. It would make you a generous victor and a gracious loser. It would give

you character and demeanor which would make you popular with your spectators. You would lift prize fighting to a higher level by your example.

You may not beleive it now, but some day you will discover that the good men in all trades and all professions and in all places have a religion. They don't all go to church every Sunday. They don't all wear black clothes and somber expressions on their countenances. They don't despise decent fun. They go to baseball games and theatres and dances; they play cards, and they have their little faults and weaknesses, but in the main they are sustained in trial by an unfaltering faith in God, and

they keep their souls and lives as clean as possible for the life eternal which surely is to come.

THE MAN WHO is in any way worthwhile has a religion of some sort.

Frank Reilly, my publisher, and I were sitting together one day a few weeks ago. Suddenly he turned to me and said:

"Eddie, do you know where your greatest strength lies?"

"No," I answered. "Where is it?"

"It's in the religious note you strike in your verses," he replied earnestly. "In all the letters which come to us regarding your work there is always mention of some

particular little bit which has to do with your faith."

"I'm glad to hear you speak of it in that way," I said. "In other words, you mean that my religion has made me a little more valuable to myself and to you."

"I wasn't thinking of it in those words," Reilly continued, "but I suppose that is precisely it. With your religion you undoubtedly are a better man for us than you would be without it. I should say that we sell many thousands more of your books because you are, at heart, deeply religious, than we should sell if you were not."

"Then, Frank," I said, "my mother was right when she taught me to believe in God, and I have

been right in sticking to that belief. It has actually paid me in dollars and cents. All the time, I was simply writing the thoughts I have had and have come to believe, which sprang out of my mother's early training and counsel, and those things which have seemed so true to me have also seemed so true to others. But I wasn't thinking of profit or popularity when I did those bits."

"No." he answered. "That is probably the reason you have earned both. But what do you suppose you were thinking of?"

"Nothing but doing the best possible bit of work I could do that day and doing it as quickly as possible. It is more than probable

that I was eager to get out on the golf course."

AND SO I rejoice in my religion and am grateful to it. It has strengthened and sustained me in times of sorrow; it has opened the door to many fellowships; it has made my speech less bitter; it has widened my field of labor; it has kept me straight when I have been tempted; it has led me to read many books I should otherwise have missed, and has brought to my door countless friends I should otherwise have lost. And, finally, as Frank Reilly has informed me, is has increased my reputation and my royalties.

But above and beyond all that, it has paid me in peace of mind.

The Man You'd Like to Be

The Man You'd Like to Be

A FRIEND and I were talking one night about everything in general and nothing in particular, as friends will do upon occasion. And then our talk drifted into a discussion of vacations.

"I don't intend to take a vacation this summer," he said to me.

"Why not?" I asked.

"Well, I've got a lot to do," he answered. "My business is growing, and it's riding me so that I don't feel justified in leaving it. Besides, a man doesn't really need vacations. I have enough amusement right here at home. There's always some-

where to go, and I can see more of my friends here than I can if I go to some flossy summer resort, or to some outlandish place where there isn't anybody but a lot of tin-can tourists stopping overnight. I took a vacation last year, and didn't get anything out of it but sunburn and sore muscles."

I let him talk on, and didn't argue very strongly with him, even though I knew he was mistaken about vacations. They are among the few real necessities of a full life. "All work and no play makes jack," as some wit has said—"jack," of course, having its slang meaning of money in this instance. And that's about all it does make!

For my part, I have very positive views about vacations. I am sure

that you will be a better man or woman for taking them, and that you will do your work with greater skill, and live your life more successfully if, once in a while, you get away from all that you are accustomed to and give yourself over to play, rest, companionship with your family and thinking about the things that are worth while and the things that are not.

You get a good perspective only by getting away from the familiar. You can't see the forest if the trees are all around you. If you never cut loose from your work and go off for new experiences, you are very likely to live a poor life, even though your bank account mounts into impressive figures.

I came to this conclusion last summer when for two full months I stepped out of the rush and swing of city life into the calm and quiet of a country neighborhood. My wife, my boy, and my girl were with me on this glorious vacation, and all of our lives will be richer because we went to Pointe Aux Barques, a little place on Lake Huron.

Day afer day I rested, played, sat on my porch looking out over the wide waters, and thought of the values of life. And this is what I have decided: Most of us hinder our own happiness by striving for the maximum. I learned that it is possible for good friends to be happy with themselves; that time isn't valuable in itself; that a little

is as much as a lot, if it is enough; and that a friend of mine who drove to Pointe Aux Barques in four hours hadn't unpacked his grip before the friend arrived who took four hours and a half to make the trip. Nothing happened in that thirty minutes the former had "saved" that was worth risking his life for.

And while I sat on my porch, hearing the swish of the waters on the shore, I decided a good many other things, too. I tried to strip life of its frills and get down to fundamentals. I let the man I would like to be have a look at the man I really am. I let him size me up, and from him I got a list of things I don't want, and of things I do want.

I PUT these things down because I hope they will help you, my friend, in your efforts to be as happy as possible. That's what we all want, and I think I have found out how to make it easier to get a little closer to your rightful share of happiness. Have you ever stopped to think that happiness is not only a right, but a duty? Have you ever stopped to think that if you are unhappy you make others unhappy? And that if you are happy you make others happy?

That's why I urge you to get away, when you can, and give the man you would like to be a look at the man you really are. The man you would like to be is the better of the two, and the wiser. Listen to him, and

see if he doesn't tell you some of the same things he told me out there in our isolated home last summer.

In our little cottage I decided that I don't want all the money in the world. I don't even want every dollar it would be possible for me to make. I have no ambition to be the highest paid member of my profession. I did cling to that thought a few years ago, but I have discarded it. I have found so many other things I would rather be and possess.

I don't want the biggest house in Detroit, the largest front yard, the finest art collection, the fastest automobile, or the swiftest pleasure yacht.

I do not want the superlative in anything I can think of, unless it

be the finest friends, and those I am sure I already have.

But I do want to do the best I can with my task every day.

I DO want to be the best possible father to Bud and Janet; the best possible husband to their mother; the best possible comrade to those who share the path with me; the best possible influence within my little circle; the best possible employee of the Detroit "Free Press;" the best possible neighbor, lodge member, club member—and these ambitions I am satisfied I can more nearly achieve by living within the limit of my powers. I don't want to break myself on the rocks of the maximum possibility in selfish performance.

I want a house I can live in and enjoy, not a mansion I can move into only to die.

I don't want to head the subscription list with one splendid splurge. I don't want to be the greatest giver to charity. I prefer to give a little, but to give that little oftener and to live longer to do my giving. I should like to die with my donations all made in advance. I don't want to die and have my charities left to a trust company to disburse. I do want to leave my family protected and provided for; but I don't want to leave them too soon, with the memory that I devoted all my strength and energy to building the fortune which they inherit.

Modern life has made us all more

or less slaves to the maximum. It seems to have grown too complex to be lived either safely or sanely. We are all trying to do too much, and a lot of it is unimportant, or not worth while. We are seeking the superlative in almost everything we attempt. We are all driving through life in the mad hope that we are going to get somewhere, some day, but we're missing the beautiful scenery along the way, and we're passing by innumerable friendly inns where kindly people dwell and simple pleasures flourish. We're dropping the bone for the shadow.

We have the idea that there can be neither pleasure nor pride in anything unless it be the largest, the

greatest, the newest, the most expensive, or the most exclusive; and we've lost the notion and habit of comfort and solitude and self entertainment. As a matter of fact, most of us are not fit company for ourselves. We've had so little time to ourselves that we're positively miserable when chance gives us an open evening.

WE ARE ALL thrill-chasers in one form or another. We are striving to be top-speed artists and contest winners and record smashers, forgetting that the great geniuses most necessarily be few. We are letting our neighbors set the pace, when we should be controlling our own destinies.

But at that little summer cottage, I discovered that many of the things which we deem important in our city life are really unimportant. Much that we fret and worry about in town doesn't matter at all.

It isn't necessary to happiness to know everything that is going on; you need not attend dinners and luncheons and parties and receptions to find contentment. Life could be lived without a telephone, and lived well, except on rare occasions. The daily telephone calls which come to us in the city, with very few exceptions, are unimportant. But the jingling of the telephone bell has grown to be a tax upon our nervous energies. We may sit down to rest, but we are

harried constantly by the knowledge that we may be summoned into conversation.

Baseball games, yacht races, the state fair, public dinners, and all the seemingly great events in life are just incidents of the day. Within reach of them, we feel that we must attend. Our neighbors will be there; not to be there also would be to suffer a loss in social prestige.

But these things don't really matter. Miss them and nothing vital is lost. Removed from them, these events come and go, and you find yourself as happy as you would have been had you been among the throng.

THERE is very little discontent in missing things, once you have made up your mind to it. A quiet, simple country church can charm you. Isolate yourself from the great city for two months, and you will find that the magnificent cathedral, with its vested choir, costly organ, and its eloquent divine, is no holier and no more restful to your soul than the humble temple of the countryside. If the essence of religion be there, you will never miss the trappings and the vestments.

We reached Pointe Aux Barques during the last week of June. For the first time in the year we sat down to an uninterrupted meal. At home I am called to the telephone two or

three times during every dinner hour. I have been wakened from a sound asleep at eleven o'clock at night to tell a total stranger that I could be found at my office at nine o'clock in the morning.

WHAT a marvelous convenience the telephone is, but what an exacting tyrant it has become! It is a brave man who can hear his telephone ring and refrain from answering the call. Personally, I have not that much courage, were I so inclined. Let it ring at night, and the urge to respond is irresistible. Always there comes into mind the fear that someone near and dear is in need.

But how seldom that urgent mes-

sage comes! I can remember only three or four times when I have been awakened from sleep to receive news which could not just as well have been imparted in the morning.

No person of good breeding would bang upon your door at ten o'clock at night, and possibly get you out of your bed, merely to ask a trifling question. But even good people seem to have no such compunctions about the telephone; with that convenience they can invade your dining-room or your bedroom fearlessly.

So far as I have been able to discover I did not lose a single friend last summer because there was no telephone at Pointe Aux Barques. In the full stretch of those two

months of peace and quiet there was no bit of news I should have had which failed to reach me.

Of course, the telephone has enlarged our opportunities; it has magnified the range of our voices fifty thousand times; it has made life easier to be lived; it has shortened distance and bridged great spaces; but it has also made peace and quiet and solitude almost an impossibility. It has increased the pace of life and added to its demands.

He who is within reach of a telephone is within reach of all the world—and I am sure there are times when that is not a healthy condition.

WHILE on this vacation I balanced small-town life against city life, and I learned this truth: The people in small towns are not nearly so sorry for themselves as the city folks are for them.

The citizens of Port Austin, a village three miles from our resort, have their good times, and they enjoy them, too. They don't have brilliantly lighted theatres and cafes and clubs to go to, and they don't have so many bridge dinners and dances, but they don't need your sympathy on that account.

Port Austin isn't a large town, and I shouldn't care about living there the whole year through; but there are people who do, and they don't seem to be pining away for

the lack of trolley cars, moving picture shows, gasoline stations and no-parking regulations.

Take the case of my old friend Sam Wallace. For years he conducted the general store at Port Austin. A little time ago something happened and the store was closed, and Sam Wallace accepted the management of a store in a larger town near by. There he was all last summer, busy and prosperous, with many more people about him—but unhappy. There was a wedding in Port Austin during the summer, and by chance I met Sam Wallace in the barber shop. He had driven over for the wedding.

"How about it?" I asked him.

"It's all right, I suppose," he said.

"I'm doing well, and we have a much bigger and better store than we had here, but I don't like it. I want to come back to Port Austin."

In Port Austin there is isolation during the long winter months, but there was Sam Wallace, sadly informing me that to him life there meant peace of mind and contentment. Just before I left, I received information that he had completed arrangements to return. The happiest man in the thumb district of Michigan to-day is Sam Wallace, who is going back to Port Austin.

I MET nearly all the Port Austin residents last summer, and none of them seemed to be noticeably sad or depressed because he had no fancy

clubs to take his friends to. They all seemed to possess the essentials of life—a good home, comfortable beds, good food, and good clothes.

Parties don't come so thick and fast in Port Austin that they grow to be a bore and an annoyance. A dance there is an event—not an ordeal! The guests attend because they wish to go, not merely because they feel compelled to go. I venture the statement that no Port Austin resident ever sets out to join a little gathering of his friends wishing to high heavens that he could remain at home.

A birthday celebration there isn't merely another dinner, like twenty others you have already attended this season. It is a thrill of pleasure,

participated in by happy, healthy people who have not worn out by over-use the faculty of enjoyment. The laughter is genuine; the comradeship is wholesome; the pleasure clean and simple, and there is no straining what is decent to provide a new thrill for jaded appetites and over-sophisticated personalities.

It may grow tedious at times to have nothing particularly exciting to do, but I fancy that monotony is no more tedious and deadly dull than having to do over and over again the thing of which the charm and novelty have long since been exhausted.

The winter before I went on this memorable vacation had been a long, hard one. For several weeks

not an automobile broke through some of the snow bound roads. The one train to Port Austin was snowed in for four days.

"What did you do up here?" I asked one of the women who was describing the winter to us.

"Well," she said, with a gracious smile, "I caught up on my reading. We are usually very busy here during the summer months, but in the winter we have our books. Last winter I read a number of books I have long wanted to get at."

To-night, as I write here, my library laughs me to scorn!

There on the shelves are dozens of books I have long wanted to get at.

THAT Port Austin lady didn't know it, but I envied her that wintry isolation and its opportunity. I have often thought I should like to be snow-bound with the books I have promised myself to read when I get the time. But the pace of my life is so swift, and the demands upon my time so many and so pressing, that the books stand on their shelves neglected and untouched.

I stood in a rich man's library a few weeks ago. He is a book lover too, and those volumes were not there merely for ornament.

"Read them all?" I asked him.

He laughed.

"I selected most of them myself," he said. "I bought them because I wished to possess them, and intended

at the time to read them. I still buy books from the same motive; but when does anybody nowadays get any time to read? Here it is December, and we haven't had an evening to ourselves since the first of October. I have books beside my bed, and I read a little every night before I go to sleep—sometimes five minutes, ten minutes, or a half-hour at the most, but that is all."

That is one of the prices men pay for the maximum performance. If you have too much money, and too many things to do, you will have drained to the dregs one cup of life, of course, but you will have left a number of sweet cups untouched.

I have another friend who is a successful business man. I have known

him since he was a boy. He has not read one book through in the past twenty-five years. He cannot stand to be alone, and he is miserable with nothing to occupy his time. His family is not sufficient. The open evenings must be filled some way. He must have entertainment —and human beings must provide it. If you call on him, you must play bridge; if he calls upon you, the bridge table must be brought out. Night after night finds him at cards, and day after day at his money-making desk; but beyond that very little enters his life.

How much richer are the years of that snow-bound woman in Port Austin who is reaping the maxi-

mum of enjoyment out of the minimum of opportunity.

Mars passed so close to the earth one August night that it seemed we could almost signal to her with a handkerchief. I sat on my porch and watched the glowing planet holding steadfastly to its course. As I recall it now, the astronomers informed us that it would be almost a century before it would be that close to us again. But Mars will come back to that identical spot at the exact minute. None of the great men now will be here to welcome it. Most of the fads and customs, of which we make so much, will have passed away. All the important things upon which we now are

bending all our energies will have been achieved and surpassed.

But Mars will not hasten its progress to reach that nearest point to Mother Earth a day sooner. The eternal things will not speed up, however much we dash about in our little affairs.

A good man I knew was killed just the other day in an automobile accident. There were four men in the car. Two were instantly killed, and the other two were badly hurt.

They were hurrying to catch a train, and the car was traveling between fifty and sixty miles an hour. Suddenly it became necessary to stop, and when the brakes were applied the car left the road and crashed into a telephone pole. Four

men immediately became the victims of the maximum possibility.

They were hurrying to catch a train, and they were nine miles from the station; but they could have made that distance at a speed of twenty-five miles an hour and had time to spare. Nor was catching the train a vital matter.

Certainly it was not a thing worth dying for.

IS SPEED so vitally important as we think? Is the difference between safety and hazard worth while?

It has been amply demonstrated that automobiles can be driven faster than one hundred miles an hour, but do many of us care to do

it? Certainly, in our everyday lives, we should never attempt to travel in an automobile at such a speed. For all practical purposes, twenty-five miles an hour is fast enough.

Speed takes its toll in every field of life. My friends who are serving at the maximum do not all die at the wheel of an automobile. I have been an eyewitness to countless tragedies of life. The struggle for the superlative has strewn the road with victims.

"It seems too bad he had to die just as he had reached the place where he could have enjoyed life," has been said by all of us, over and over again.

"He worked all his life to build

that business and now that he could have rested he is cut down."

"He looked forward to this new house with so much pleasure. It is pitiful that he could not have lived to enjoy it."

"He can have everything which money can buy, but the doctors have given him but a few months more to live."

What do these utterances signify? Did these collapses merely happen, or were they self-produced? Do they not mean that those men traveled at the maximum speed for years to gain a fortune or renown, only to fall, broken and breathless, in the shadow of their goals?

Into a new, splendid mansion a year or so ago moved a friend of

mine. It was a magnificent structure, and marked the crowning achievement of his busy life. He had made a fortune, and upon that house and its furnishings had spent a vast amount of money. Within two months after he entered it he died.

Twenty years before he could have bought a home that would have suited every purpose. Ten years later he could have owned an even costlier house. But he wanted the biggest house in his neighborhood; he wanted the costliest house and the most gorgeous. He went after the maximum possibility and he got it; but he burned himself out in the struggle.

He bartered at least twenty years

of peace and contentment and pleasure for two months of magnificence and pride.

Better, I think, the smaller house along the way which you can live in and enjoy from day to day than the castle on the mountain which you may possess but never enjoy. Better, I think, to have earned a little less and to have lived a little more; to have distributed your gifts of charity in small sums over a stretch of years than to have your reputation for doing good discovered and made known by a post-mortem blaze of munificence.

Give me a little less of these worldly treasures, and a little longer time in this world to enjoy what I may possess.

I don't want it all, and I don't want my needs to increase so rapidly that I shall never have enough. If I must serve the maximum, let it be in this: that I shall make the most out of my life in friendships and in simple pleasures. I would not wear out my friends by trespassing upon their time and generosity so much that they shall become tired of me. Many a good comradeship has gone to ruin at full speed.

We did not have regular week-end parties at that summer cottage of ours; but the few we did have we enjoyed to the full. The visits of our friends were real events. We looked forward to them and were sorry when they ended. I was as eager as a boy to see John Fry and Lou Wilber and

George Matthew Adams and Jeff Webb and Charley Severey and George Phillips. I had been away from them for weeks, and there was a thrill in their arrival.

We found their conversation bright and sparkling and the laughter had the real ring to it. Like those good Port Austin people, who have parties only now and then, I found myself enthusiastically frolicsome. We were manufacturing our own fun; we were finding joy within ourselves, and were making use of it. We had none of the city paraphernalia of pleasure; we were on our own resources. Better than all, we were not being run on a schedule. We could do as we pleased when we were pleased to do

it. We didn't have to be somewhere else at a certain time.

AND so I came back to Detroit rested and refreshed and with a new outlook on life. Since getting once more into the daily routine I have been wondering about it all.

I gained, I am sure, more than I lost. The family ties are closer and stronger. The children learned to know me through the day, and I learned to know and understand them. We have had two full months of happiness and contentment which we can always remember, let the future hold what it must.

I think that Mother and I have together caught a new perspective. I feel that we both have a truer sense

of values than we had last June. We have learned that we can both find pleasure and contentment from within. When others are not near to entertain us, we can entertain ourselves.

We have come to realize that to be the happiest guest at the dinner party, one should not have attended too many dinners. We have learned that it is better to drive slowly and enjoy the scenery along the way and arrive safely, than to drive madly and know nothing of the trip.

We have both come to believe that the minimum is a better friend than the maximum in most respects. We do not want to see how far we can go, nor how much we can get, nor find what is the ultimate

limit of our capacity for pleasure or accomplishment.

I want to travel at a little slower pace; to rest when I am weary, that I may have something of strength and patience and good nature and courage in reserve when the burden grows heavy and the pathway difficult. I want to keep on good terms with my neighbor; but if he must go faster, and can go faster than I care to travel, or can travel, I do not want to wreck my life or my position in a mad effort to keep pace with him.

And I do want to stay on good terms with myself. I don't want to wear out my nervous system striving for something which I do not really need. If I am not to know all the

luxuries of life, I want to retain as long as possible the faculty of enjoying those I am permitted to possess.

DO OUR children need all that we think they need? Would they not be just as happy-hearted with a little less? Would they not be just as proud of us, though we could not do all that our neighbors do? Would it not be better for them also if we left to them a little of life's work to do?

The man who knows enough to make a million dollars should know enough not to let his son become an idler; but unfortunately he usually mistakes indulgence for kindness. With less he would be wiser. With

less he might live longer and enjoy more. With less he would not become sated with pleasure nor bored by entertainment. Life would still be an adventure, and still hold the thrill of excitement for him.

We are going back to that summer cottage next June. We did not drain that cottage of all its charm last summer. We didn't pack into every day and every night all the pleasure which Pointe Aux Barques could possibly provide. We didn't have our friends up there so often or so long that we grew tired of them.

We didn't try to find what was the maximum of happiness the little spot could give. I didn't explore every nook and corner of the place. I didn't see every tree and every sun-

set. There is enough pleasure up there, I know, to last me for a lifetime. I didn't try to exhaust its possibilities in a single season.

So with our own lives. We don't want to do or to see or to taste everything in too great a hurry. We hope never to come to that dreadful day when we can sit down and say that we have done all there is to do, know all that can be known, and that life has no new experience to offer.

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